

VZCZCXRO2052  
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHRY #0742/01 3441634  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 091634Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3197  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000742

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [GV](#)  
SUBJECT: CONAKRY GOVERNOR FOCUSED ON SECURITY AND SANITATION

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The new governor of Conakry used a recent courtesy call by Poloff as an opportunity to bring in news crews and expound on his policy objectives over national television while creating a perception of a "close" connection to the U.S. Embassy. A somewhat controversial appointment, the governor spoke at length about how he had helped resolve the recent spate of youth protests. He highlighted his top priorities -- security and urban sanitation -- but offered very little in terms of a policy strategy for addressing these issues. In the end, he requested U.S. Government assistance to help him realize his objectives. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) On December 3, Poloff met with the new governor of Conakry, Soriba Sorel Camara, who had been appointed to his position by President Conte on October 14. A prominent member of the ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP), Camara is a member of the party's executive bureau and responsible for representing youth interests. He had previously served as a deputy to the National Assembly. The mayor of Dixin (one of the five districts in Conakry), Yamoussa Yass Sylla, also joined the meeting. Approximately ten minutes into the meeting, local press entered the room and proceeded to videotape the entire discussion.

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PRESS OP  
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3. (SBU) The governor seemed eager to receive Poloff, noting that the U.S. Embassy was the first diplomatic mission to visit his office since he had been appointed. Once the press arrived on the scene, he used the opportunity to expound at length on what he characterized as his two most pressing priorities: security and urban sanitation.

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RESOLVING YOUTH PROTESTS  
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4. (SBU) Poloff noted that the series of protests in November followed almost immediately upon Camara's appointment (reftels), and asked how these events had affected the governor's initial days in office. (COMMENT. During the protests, some contacts told Poloff that the governor's appointment was one of the reasons behind the demonstrations. END COMMENT). Camara explained that certain neighborhoods are particularly prone to protest activity, such as Ratoma, which is where the Embassy is located. According to the governor, these areas can erupt into violence because they are heavily populated with unemployed youths, and then the government traditionally responds with force that results in human rights abuses and deaths.

5. (SBU) Camara said that the November protests were fundamentally different in that he and the new Minister of Security purposely agreed that the government would not

intervene with force, but instead, would try to talk to youths and encourage non-violence. "I saw that there were certain young intellectuals involved in the protests so I targeted our message toward these leaders, thinking that they could then influence others," CAMARA said. According to the Governor, the youths came to his office for a meeting and told him that they felt abandoned and marginalized, and were tired of unfulfilled government promises. "I concluded that the youth were mainly frustrated," he told Poloff.

¶6. (SBU) Following this meeting, the Governor said he organized a large youth meeting at the stadium in Ratoma to encourage non-violence. Along with the Minister of Security, Camara circulated through various neighborhoods to meet with youths and elders, emphasizing that violence would not solve any problems. The Governor claimed that this strategy successfully brought the protests to an end.

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THE GOOD POLICE ARE IN THE MILITARY  
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¶7. (SBU) Switching to the overall security situation in Conakry, Poloff noted that international and domestic contacts alike have been increasingly concerned about the apparent increase in crime. Camara agreed, admitting that at least 60% of these crimes are perpetrated by individuals in military uniforms. He added that the police have been largely ineffective in addressing crime because "the good police officers have been recruited into the military and the rest are not paid well and generally unarmed." He added "they know who the bandits are, but they are afraid or

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unwilling to act."

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ENCOURAGING VIGILANTE JUSTICE  
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¶8. (SBU) With cameras still rolling, Camara emphasized that addressing the security situation is one of his top priorities. The Governor explained how he has been encouraging individual neighborhoods to establish civilian "watch groups" to help enforce order. He mentioned that he had recently created a 1 million GnF (\$208) reward for any civilian that turns in an armed bandit, adding that he had already handed out one such award.

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TWO MILLION PEOPLE AND ONE GARBAGE TRUCK  
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¶9. (SBU) Turning to his other top priority, urban sanitation, the Governor said that it is imperative to clean up the city of Conakry. He said that the city generates approximately 1800 tons of garbage a day, but that the government is only capable of collecting between 1000 and 1200 tons. Camara pointed out that 85% of trash collection equipment is out of order, and that the city only owns one garbage truck that is still operational. He added that the general lack of reliable power in the capital limits the city's ability to process the trash effectively, suggesting that most of it is simply burned.

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A TRASHCAN IN EVERY HOME  
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¶10. (SBU) The Governor repeatedly asked for donor assistance to help him address his two key priorities, security and sanitation. On the security front, Camara said that police forces needed equipment and training. With respect to sanitation, he asked for equipment. Generally silent throughout the meeting, the Mayor of Dixin piped up on the sanitation issue and said "if you could just help us put one

trashcan in every household in Conakry, you could really help us solve this problem."

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COMMENT  
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¶11. (SBU) Although Poloff intended the meeting to be a basic courtesy call, the governor's political posturing and invitation to the press suggests that he had his own agenda. His appointment was considered somewhat controversial since he is perceived to be very close to President Conte and the ruling party, so he may have been seeking to reinforce his standing by broadcasting his "close" association with the U.S. Embassy. When asked about his political vision, Camara spoke at length detailing all the problems, but had little to offer in terms of a policy strategy. As has been the case all too frequently in recent months, the governor seemed mainly interested in seeing what the U.S. Government might be able to offer in terms of direct assistance. END COMMENT.  
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